

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PROVOS CHANGE RULES FOR CEASE-FIRE

SUMMARY: PROVOS HAVE PUT OUT STATEMENT WHICH SEEMS TO FORESEE CONTINUING NI CEASE-FIRE FOR A WHILE, BUT WHICH ALLOWS LOCAL GUN-MEN MUCH FREEDOM OF ACTION. THIS COULD LEAD TO FULL-SCALE HOSTILITIES BY MISTAKE. THERE ARE NOW SO MANY SPLITS IN THE "REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT" THAT ITS ACTIONS MUST BE EXPECTED TO BE ERRATIC. END SUMMARY.

1. AS DEPT WILL BE WELL BE WELL AWARE, PAST WEEK HAS BEEN FULL OF CONFLICTING REPORTS ON PLANS OF PROVISIONAL IRA. PROBLEM HAS BEEN THAT SOME SOURCES IN THE "REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT" ARE DISSATISFIED WITH IRA PROGRESS SINCE THE CEASE-FIRE AND WANT TO START SHOOTING AGAIN. OTHERS, HOWEVER, WANT THE CEASE-FIRE TO LAST A WHILE LONGER AND HAVE PREDICTED THAT IT WILL. ON NIGHT OF APRIL 7, DUBLIN SINN FEIN/IRA LEADERSHIP PUT OUT A STATEMENT APPARENTLY AIMED AT REASSERTING AUTHORITY. THE STATEMENT IS, HOWEVER, SO VAGUE AS TO ALLOW ALMOST ANY READING. IT DOES NOT CALL FOR AN END TO THE CEASE-FIRE, BUT IT DOES SAY THAT THE IRA ARMY COUNCIL HAS ISSUED NEW ORDERS "GOVERNING DEFENSIVE ACTION AND TRUCE VIOLATIONS." SINCE PROVOS HAVE FREQUENTLY ACCUSED BRITISH OF TRUCE VIOLATIONS, THIS COULD BE READ BY HARD-LINERS AS ALMOST A CARTE BLANCHE.

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2. STATEMENT CONCLUDES THAT "THE ACTION OF IRA UNITS WILL BE RELATED TO THE LEVEL OF VIOLENT AND HOSTILE ACTIVITY BY CROWN AND SECTARIAN FORCES." THIS IS A CONUNDRUM. THE PROVOS MAY HAVE REASON TO COMPLAIN ABOUT ACTIVITY OF SECTARIAN MURDER SQUADS, BUT IT TAKES ACTIVITY BY ARMY AND POLICE TO REPRESS ASSASSINATION SQUADS. INCREASED ACTIVITY BY SECURITY FORCES COULD IN TURN SERVE AS AN EXCUSE FOR THE PROVOS TO UNDERTAKE "DEFENSIVE ACTIONS." EVEN ASSUMING GOOD WILL ON BOTH SIDES, IT IS EASY TO SEE HOW "ACTION" AND RETALIATIONS COULD LEAD TO AN EFFECTIVE END OF THE CEASE-FIRE.

3. ALTHOUGH THERE IS LITTLE SYMPATHY HERE FOR THE PROVOS, SOME DUBLIN OBSERVERS DO BELIEVE THE BRITISH HAVE MISSED AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW THEY COULD TREAT THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IMPARTIALLY. INTERNMENT IS THE MAIN ISSUE: THERE ARE STILL CATHOLICS WHO HAVE BEEN HELD WITHOUT TRIAL FOR YEARS, WHILE ALL PROTESTANTS HAVE BEEN RELEASED. SOME RECENTLY RELEASED PROTESTANTS WERE RUMORED TO HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR LAST YEAR'S DUBLIN BOMBINGS, WHICH WERE THE WORST INCIDENT OF VIOLENCE ANYWHERE IN IRELAND. INTERNMENT HAS LONG BEEN CALLED "THE IRA'S BEST RECRUITING SERGEANT," AND IT STILL IS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOI REALIZES HOW DIFFICULT IT IS FOR THE BRITISH TO RELEASE KNOWN GUNMEN WHEN THERE IS NO CONFIDENCE THAT CURRENT CEASE-FIRE WILL LAST.

4. ONE STRIKING DEVELOPMENT IN RECENT MONTHS HAS BEEN THE CRUMBLING OF COHESION IN THE TRADITIONALLY DISCIPLINED "REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT." MOST DRAMATIC EXAMPLE IS THE VIOLENT FEUD BETWEEN "OFFICIAL" SINN FEIN/IRA AND ITS SPLINTER GROUP, THE NEW IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY (IRSP). PROVOS HAVE AVOIDED OPEN FRACTURES, BUT ONLY AT THE EXPENSE OF ALLOWING SPLITS IN THE LEADERSHIP TO CONTINUE (SEE ABOVE STATEMENT). ONE ASPECT OF THE FRAGMENTATION IS THAT SOME OF THE GUNMEN ARE KILLING EACH OTHER OFF. THE MORE NEGATIVE SIDE IS THAT THEY STILL HAVE THE STRENGTH TO KILL MANY OF THE PUBLIC, AND THEIR INTENTIONS OF DOING SO HAVE BECOME EVEN MORE UNPREDICTABLE. MOORE

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